

A LESSER KNOWN ZIMMERMANN TELEGRAM September 26

The April 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin was an ill-fated attempt by revolutionaries to overthrow British rule in Ireland during WW1 (1914-1918). This particular group of Irish revolutionaries worked closely with the Germans, then at war with the British. Part of this collaboration apparently included providing agents who would perform sabotage for the Germans in certain parts of the world.

According to a January 26, 1915, decrypted message from German Foreign Minister Arthur Zimmermann to the German military attaché in Washington, DC, Roger Casement, a major Irish revolutionary leader at the time, had identified three individuals (residing in Philadelphia, Chicago, and New York respectively) to the Germans who could provide candidates “suitable for carrying out sabotage in the United States and Canada”:

Zimmermann opined that the first two individuals were absolutely trustworthy and discreet while the third one was trustworthy but not discreet. He further instructed that sabotage targets in the United States should be all kinds of factories which supply war-materials. However, railways, embankments and bridges should be left alone. Finally, neither the Embassy nor Irish-German propaganda (NFI) should be compromised in the process.

Of note is that the United States was at the time not yet at war with Germany. The U.S., as a neutral nation, was willing to sell to either side in the Great War being fought in Europe. However, the U.S. required the purchaser to arrange shipping itself, and the powerful British Navy prevented shipments to Germany and other Central Powers. In effect, U.S. industry was selling only to the Western Allies.

The name Zimmermann would mean something to many of our readers since he was the same person, as Germany’s Foreign Minister, who proposed an alliance via telegram (the infamous “Zimmermann Telegram”) with Mexico against the United States in late 1916. When the contents of this telegram became public, it caused such an outcry among Americans that it facilitated U.S. entry into the war

against Germany (April 1917). At this same time, Zimmermann also was seeking to foment revolution against Great Britain in India.

CCH, for the record, does not know if the Germans ever contacted any of these three for assistance. Presumably, U.S. security personnel would have monitored the activities of the three (more specific identifying information was in the decrypt) but it would imply that this particular message was broken in a timely manner. CCH does not yet know when it was broken.